

United States Senate

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August 22, 2002

Dr. William T. Hogarth
Assistant Administrator for Fisheries
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East West Highway SSMC3
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dr. Hogarth:

It has come to my attention that pursuant to a petition filed September 4, 2001, the National Marine Fisheries Service is currently evaluating adding the Atlantic White Marlin (*Tetrapturus albidus*) to the Endangered Species list. While it appears that the Atlantic White Marlin population is in some decline, and action is required to ensure the continued health of the species, I do not believe that listing on the ESL is appropriate at this time.

The Endangered Species Act is an effective management tool in situations where the endangered population entirely, or for the most part, occurs in areas within or governed by the United States. Examples of successful application of the ESA include the Brown Pelican, the American Alligator, and the Greenback Cutthroat Trout. In these cases, the population of these endangered or threatened species were covered by management regimes of the U.S., and populations have begun to recover as a result of protections provided.

In the case of the Atlantic White Marlin however, the ability of the United States to manage the species is limited because the species is found and harvested throughout the Atlantic ocean by vessels from dozens of countries who are not subject to U.S. law. In fact, mortality on this stock from U.S. commercial and recreational fisherman is quite low. For example, during the recent White Marlin Open tournament in Ocean City, Maryland – the largest recreational tournament for White Marlin - 1,065 were caught, and 98% of those, or 1,047, were immediately released alive back to the sea.

ICCAT (International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas), of which the United States is a party, is responsible for management of migratory international fish species such as tuna and marlin. In its 2001 report on the health of the marlin, the Commission notes that *'One of the weakest points of the...white marlin assessment was the lack of quantitative characterization of the uncertainty associated with the estimates of stock indicators. A second weak point was the lack of any projections of population trajectories in the future.'* Elimination of these weak points and developing an effective international management regime should be our goal.

Obtaining adequate information on population numbers, habitat, and fishing pressure is an appropriate next step.

Through our membership in ICCAT, and other international bodies, the United States can have a more effective role in the recovery of this and other important species than if we are to rely on the authorities of the Endangered Species Act. I support your efforts to develop a recovery plan for the White Marlin that includes strong conservation measures. I would appreciate the opportunity to be advised of the status of your considerations. Please contact me or Jim Reilly in my Washington office at 202-224-2441 at your convenience..

Sincerely yours, I am

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Thomas R. Carper". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator